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SUBJECT: ISLAMABAD REFUGEE AFFAIRS WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT: MARCH
23-27

Resuming Repatriation on April 1
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1. (U) UNHCR said voluntary repatriation of registered Afghans in Pakistan would be resumed on April 1. This repatriation would be only from Peshawar as the security situation in Balochistan does not allow for repatriation at the moment. Registered Afghans living in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), Punjab, Sindh, as well as in the federal capital district of Islamabad, who choose to repatriate to Afghanistan with UNHCR assistance, can approach the voluntary repatriation center in Peshawar.

Refugee Villages in Swabi, NWFP
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2. (SBU) Refugee Affairs Specialist (RAS) visited the International Medical Corps (IMC) health project to monitor and evaluate IMC's primary health and gender based violence (GBV) projects for Afghans in two refugee villages of Barakai in Swabi district of NWFP. IMC is providing primary health care services to approximately 50,000 Afghan refugees through two basic health units (BHU). IMC has competent and hardworking staff who work with the refugee community six days a week with extensive community support. Though IMC has established a network of health and other committees across refugee villages, it needs to link health education with water and sanitation issues. RAS noted from discussions with refugee elders that the number of patients with hepatitis B and C is on the rise, and one person has died from hepatitis.

3. (SBU) The IMC GBV project is one of the new programs PRM added during the last funding cycle. IMC has developed GBV literature in local languages and formed committees to help raise awareness of refugees and educate them on GBV issues. IMC has not so far been confronted with security issues and is maintaining a low profile to avoid interruption. There is a need to increase the intensity of monitoring visits by the IMC Peshawar office and their coordination with local health authorities. IMC's next proposal to PRM should reflect these issues, and how it plans to address them.

PATTERSON